
NEWS RELEASE

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GREGG SECURES PASSAGE OF TWO AMENDMENTS TO INCREASE EDUCATION FUNDING

Amendments give states \$5 billion for flexible spending, increase federal funds for IDEA

WASHINGTON— U.S. Senator Judd Gregg (R-NH), Chairman of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee, tonight saw Senate approval of the second of two education amendments he has offered to the fiscal year 2003 omnibus appropriations act. With each amendment, Senator Gregg has led the effort in the Senate to responsibly increase funding for critical education programs.

Tonight's Senate-approved amendment appropriates an additional \$1.5 billion for schools to implement the IDEA. Under the leadership of Senate Republicans, federal funding for special education has increased from \$2.4 billion in 1996 to \$10.5 billion in 2002, resulting in a 334 percent increase.

Speaking on the Senate floor in support of this amendment, Senator Gregg stated, "This amendment is simple. It says, let's set special education as one of our top priorities. On top of the \$1 billion the President put in for special education this year, and on top of the \$1 billion he put in last year, let's add another \$1.5 billion for this crucial program. This increase is critical for schools around our country to shoulder the high costs of special education and represents a marked commitment by this Senate to live up to the federal government's commitment to funding its share of special education expenses.

"Since 1996, as a result of increases instituted and supported by Senate Republicans, federal funding for special education has increased by 334 percent- a substantial amount given the fact that during President Clinton's term in office, his proposed budget increases for special education were relatively nonexistent. In just two years, President Bush has requested more increases for special education than all of Clinton's years combined. Together with this increase, this year's funding is the single largest amount of federal funding that special education has ever received, and I am pleased to have helped lead the effort to increase federal dollars for special education."

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Late last week, Senator Gregg successfully included a \$5 billion increase for education funding to the states in the fiscal year 2003 omnibus appropriations bill. The funds can be used for the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act, the No Child Left Behind Act or higher education programs. To pay for the increase in funding, while staying within the discretionary caps established by the Appropriations Committee leaders with the Administration, this amendment requires a one percent across-the-board rescission for all programs funded within the omnibus bill. The net increase for education would be \$4 billion dollars in new funds for education available in block grants to the states. States will have 100% flexibility to spend the increase in funds among these programs based on local priorities alone.

Senator Gregg stated, "This amendment increases funding for education and does so in a responsible way. There are absolutely no strings attached to this increase in education funding. This money will be provided in block grants to schools to use in whatever ways they believe best benefits their students to cover any possible funding shortfalls created by No Child Left Behind or the Individuals with Disabilities Act.

"Schools can use this money for programs related to No Child Left Behind, for IDEA. States and local school districts will have 100 percent flexibility in deciding how they want to spend this increase in education funding. In addition this funding increase is paid for and will not further increase the federal deficit. It's done in a fiscally responsible way that benefits both students and taxpayers. While I continue to feel there are enough federal funds available to cover costs related to NCLB, these dollars will enhance state and local flexibility in achieving the goals of NCLB or can be used to offset special education costs if so desired."

The amendment provides that these funds, and any other proposed increase beyond the existing education funding levels in the bill, be re-cast into an education block grant to state for support of any purposes related to the IDEA, No Child Left Behind Act or higher education programs.

The omnibus appropriations bill with these two amendments is currently pending on the Senate floor. Once passed, this bill will head to a joint Senate/House of Representatives Conference Committee for final corrections and reconciliation. The House legislation does not presently contain Senator Gregg's language. Once differences have been worked out, the bill will come back before the two Houses of Congress for final passage. The bill will then be ready to be signed into law by the President.

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